

THE MARYLAND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES – JUNE 16, 2004

Chairman Chris Dollar called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m.

Approval for Minutes from April 2004 Meeting

- April meeting minutes were approved with changes.
 - 1) Page one under Secretary C. Ronald Franks and Assistant Secretary Michael Slattery, the following modifications were made:
 - (a) 3 (b) Commissioner Lamp indicated, “There is not one lota of evidence supporting a need for DNR to open a generalized hunt for black bears in Maryland.”
 - (b) 3 (e) Deleted (i) and (ii) and replaced comments with, “The Department could not accept the offer with the accompanying restriction.”
 - 2) Page two under Final Seasons and Bag Limits Proposals:
 - (a) Bullet three changed 1-obstained to 1-against.
 - 3) Page three under Maryland Farm Bureau Update:
 - (a) Bullet four changed to MFB is in support of the Cover Crop Program.
 - 4) Page three under New Business:
 - (a) Bullet one changed to Chairman Tim Lambert resigned as Chairman and as a member of the Wildlife Advisory Commission.

WHS Natural Heritage Program Update

- Presentation by Glenn Therres, Associate Director
- The Heritage Program mission is the conservation and management of Rare, Threaten, and Endangered Species (RTE) and non-game wildlife. This includes both plants and animals, and their natural communities. The Natural Heritage Program has a staff of twenty-one fulltime members.
- 2004 Annual Bald Eagles Nesting Survey [Attachment A].
 - 1) Staff members have been monitoring bald eagles in Maryland since 1977.
 - 2) Bald Eagles nested in twenty-one counties and Baltimore City.
 - (a) Occupied Nest demonstrates breeding pairs.
 - (b) Active Nest reveals birds that laid eggs.
 - (c) The documented total is 383 nesting eagles. All surveys are done by air but due to flight restriction, staff could not survey 10 of the nesting sights. Due to the high expense and the limited staff, now staff members survey four watershed, Choptank River, Chester River, Patuxent River, and Lower Potomac River in Charles County to compile data for the Maryland’s eagle population.
 - 3) Bald Eagles are still on the USFWS Threatened Species list and are protected under the Bald Eagle Protection Act, which was established in the 1940s.
 - (a) It is hopeful that the status of bald eagles will be moved under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, especially since the Bald Eagles Federal Act prohibits the shooting of eagles.
 - (b) The numbers from 1977-2004 show that Maryland bald eagles nesting success and reproduction rate averages 1 ½ young per nest [Attachment B].
 - (c) The eagle population has recovered and the intent of the law is to provide protection for a species until the population recovers.
 - 4) The Chesapeake Critical Area Act provides conservation of Maryland’s Chesapeake shoreline and about eighty percent of the total eagles in Maryland are located within the Critical Area.
- Comprehensive Wildlife Diversity Plan (WDP) [Attachment C]
 - 1) The focus of the plan is species at risk. This species at risk plan will be used as an umbrella for other species.
 - 2) The purpose of the plan is to provide a blue print for where on Maryland’s landscape should conservation attention be directed to.
 - 3) Mandated by Congress for states to develop a WDP summarizing species of greater conservation needs by October 2005.
 - 4) Guidelines for Selecting Wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need [Attachment D].
 - 5) Heritage staff members have identified species of greatest conservation need [Attachment E].
 - 6) Comments will be accepted on Saturday, June 26, 2004.

Wildlife Heritage Fund

- Presentation given by Commissioner Lowell Adams.
- The Wildlife Heritage Fund (WHF) proposal was prepared due to lack of funding for conservation projects in Maryland.

- The Maryland Sportsman's Association (MSA) and the Maryland's Teaming With Wildlife Coalition (MTWWC) have been looking at other funding sources because federal funds requires matching funds by the states.
- The Maryland Wildlife Heritage Fund proposal was distributed to the Commissioners with the April 21, 2004 WAC Minutes {ATTACHMENT C}. The (WHF) proposal will be redistributed to the Commissioners with the June minutes.
- Motion was made to defer the discussion on the WHF proposal and how to proceed to the August WAC meeting. Commissioner Pascal seconded motion; motion was passed with all in favor.
 - 1) Commissioners agreed to review the WHF proposal before the August meeting.
 - 2) Commissioner Adams recommended that an invitation should be sent out to former Chairman Tim Lambert. Former Chairman Lambert has done an enormous amount of research on the development of WHF; therefore, his input is definitely needed. Chairman Dollar agreed to invite Mr. Lambert to the August WAC meeting.

WHS Regional Operations Program Update

- Presentation by Pete Jayne, Associate Director
- The Regional Operations staff is responsible for managing public lands for WHS, managing check stations, handling wildlife response, issuing crop damage permits, and providing information and education presentations.
 - 1) Under the crop damage permit, over 13,000 deer were taken down outside the deer season and bag limits. Staff issued over 1,900 crop damage permits to farmers.
 - 2) The Black Bear Response team is on call for emergencies 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Bears are definitely on the move. For example, a bear that had been on the move made it to Aberdeen. It was the first bear that made it through tidal waters in a long time. A second bear made it to Aberdeen in the fall; and a third bear traveled to Harford County from Harrisburg Pennsylvania last winter. This bear was tagged in Pennsylvania as a nuisance bear and the bear demonstrated bad bear behavior. Staff added Pennsylvania's data to Maryland's data. In the end, the bear had to be euthanized, which is a management tool under the Black Bear Response Plan.
 - 3) Staff members are working to expand hunting opportunities on public lands.
 - (a) Some of the lands take up to 2 years to open and others may take more. For instance, Chesapeake Forest Lands (over 58,000 acres) required a massive amount of staff and staff hours. Commissioners will receive an update on CFL at the August meeting.
 - (b) We will obtain public input on expanding hunting opportunities on controversial areas before proceeding. Commissioners requested a list of properties that are being opened for hunting opportunities [Appendix I].

New Legislative Concept Proposals for 2005

- Director Paul Peditto introduced Ms. Emily Wilson, Director of Government Affairs.
 - 1) Ms. Wilson will prioritize the bills for 2005 Legislative Session.
 - 2) The Department will revisit the Service Fee bill.
 - 3) WHS does not have the authority to establish service fees. This authority must be approved through the legislative process. During the 2004 Legislative Session, WHS had a bill to address this but the bill did not pass.
 - (a) Commissioner Lamp presented excellent testimony but the Committee viewed the service fees bill as a tax.
 - (b) There was group discussion on how to educate Maryland's political leaders and the public on how we are funded. The goal is to have the non-hunters make available financial support for managing wildlife.
 - (i) Commissioner Gregory suggested publishing a brochure outlining the how WHS is funded and what the cost if for managing wildlife. In addition, he suggested using the venue of Maryland Public Television to get the message out to the public.
 - (ii) Commissioner Pascal will invite Chairman Busch of the Environmental Affairs Committee to the July or August WAC meeting. Commissioner Pascal will contact Paul Peditto as to which meeting Chairman Busch will be able to attend.
 - (iii) WHS appreciates the Commission's support in trying to acquire the approval to establish service fees through the legislative process. [Appendix I]
 - 4) The Department will revisit the Fur User Stamp bill.

Public Opinion on Fish and Wildlife Management Issues

- The survey provided the public's opinion on the reputation and credibility of Fish and Wildlife agencies in the Northeast United States.
- The Leadership Team is taking a hard look at the survey results to see how the Maryland Department of Natural Resources rated. For instance, one question on the survey is how do you feel about Maryland's hunting fees?
 - 1) 30-percent were in support of paying more to hunt.
 - 2) Majority said the fees are about right.
 - 3) Half felt the fees were too high
- The results were close with Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania has not had a fee increase for fifteen years.
- With the budget cuts, a major policy shift was recommended to help units share the revenue and to make sure the customers are being helped.

State Forest & Park Service Update

- No Report

Natural Resources Police Update

- Sergeant Charron provided a summary of Natural Resources Police activity from April 19, 2004 through June 13, 2004 [Attachment G].
 - 1) Commissioner Gregory attended a meeting over on the Eastern Shore at a Hunting Club. The members expressed concerned on ATVs usage and the enforcement.
 - 2) ATVs cannot be use on public lands but ATVs can be use on farmlands.

Maryland Farm Bureau Update

- Presentation by Kurt Fuchs, Maryland Farm Bureau (MFB) Representative
- Reports have been made regarding failure to dispose of deer carcasses that were taken under the authority of the Crop Damage Permit. Mr. Fuchs will meet with Pete Jayne and Paul Peditto to discuss the protocols.
 - 1) Statue clearly states that deer carcasses have to be properly disposed of.
 - 2) Staff members are aware that during the summer months this is difficult. The recommendation is to promote the taking under of deer in September and October months because the fawns are able to survive without their mothers.
- Blindsites – Beginning next year, the riparian license will be available for a 3-year term. When ownership changes the new owners need to reapply for the riparian license.

Old Business

- Employee, Conservationist, and Farmer of the Year nominees, Bob Beyer needs the totals as soon as possible.
- The Final Urban Wildlife Subcommittee Guidelines [Attachment G] were handed out to the Commissioners.

New Business

- Commissioners discuss the status of WAC members.
- Commissioners will officially recognize Former Chairman Tim Lambert for his service on the WAC at the MSA banquet.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Attendance

Members:	L. Adams, C. Dollar, G. Fratz, L R. Gregory,, J. Lamp, R. Pascal
Guests:	K. Fuchs
Staff:	B. Beyer, K. Blizzard, R. Charron, M. Hoffman, P. Jayne, B. King, P. Peditto, T. Spencer, E. Wilson
Absent:	L. Julio, J. Scarborough, C. Garner